

INDUSTRIES AND IMPLEMENTS.

281 When a skin was brought in, it was hung on a sort of tripod, and with a chisel-like flesher of buffalo-leg bone the meat was removed. Then the hide was stretched on the ground to dry. When dried, the hair and thin coat of skin on the same side were cut off with the familiar implement of bent elk-horn, always provided, in recent times, with a metal blade. To make rawhide, nothing more was done. To make dressed skin, liver, grease, and brains, boiled and mixed in the proper proportion, were rubbed or soaked into the skin and then removed with an ordinary scraper, now usually of sheet-iron or tin. Finally the skin was worked over with a rough stone or a bone. In preparing buffalo-skins for a tent, four steps were recognized: first, drying the skins; next, removing the hair; third, soaking them; and, last, scraping and working them over. Skins were softened by being drawn over a rope of buffalo-sinew.

281 When a woman had prepared enough buffalo-skins for a tent, she made a feast and invited other women who were skilful at making tents. The most expert of these fitted and tacked the skins together loosely, and the others sewed them fast. When a robe was to be embroidered, the woman who wanted to make it prepared food and invited other women to help her in her work. When the robe was finished, the man who was to receive it was called in, and it was given to him.

281 Caps of buffalo-skin were worn in winter. They were provided with flaps that were pulled down over the ears and held by a string fastened under the chin. Mittens of buffalo-skin were also used, tied together by a string which passed behind the neck. When the hunter was ready to shoot, he slipped his hands out of the mittens.

282 Simple flat unbraided ropes of rawhide were cut out of the skin in a long spiral. After having been cut, they were stretched between two sticks. In order to soften them, they were covered with manure, or tied to a horse that dragged them over the ground until they became pliable.

323 Pottery is declared to have been made formerly of clay mixed with crushed rock. Rawhide bags, drawn together at the top with a string, were also used for cooking by means of hot rocks. The often described Plains method of cooking in holes in the ground lined with rawhide was also followed.

322 When fire was struck with flint and steel, dry mushrooms were sometimes used as tinder.

411 Bows were most frequently made of cherry-wood, but sometimes of ash. Ash was harder and more elastic, but more brittle. Sinew backing was

776 Ventres or the enemy. According to another, the sun on one
 821 occasion delivered seven Gros Ventre men, to be killed by the
 [534] Crow, into the hands of a Gros Ventre woman captured by the
 Crow, so the woman claimed. Apart from the incidental inclusion of the moon, bracketed with the sun, in prayers and in invitations to sweat as above stated, there was no specific independent moon cult and in no case, according to our informants, were sacrifices ever made to the moon. Nor, so far as we could discover, was there any star cult, though the stars, or some of them such as those constituting the Great Dipper, the Pleiades, the Bear were seemingly looked upon as in some sense "spirits" or personal beings. In the archaic era, before the flood and Ni:hohat, people used to go in the morning to get fire from the morning star, "the cross," just as in modern times the old people used to go in the morning to get a live coal from a neighbor's hearth instead of using matches. The morning star served also as a "clock." When people were planning to get up unusually early in the morning they would be guided by its position in the heavens. Someone in the lodge would be told: "Go out and see if the cross is up yet."

[372]
 [805]
 776 Among the beings involved in prayers and invited to sweat, after the Supreme Being, were the "Four Old Men," currently referred to by English-speaking Gros Ventres as the "Four Holy Old Men." According to Singer and Coming Daylight there were also, it appears, "Four Old Women," but this statement was not independently confirmed by other informants.

Very little is known about these Four Old Men. The Boy had more than once asked his father about them, but Lanie Bull could only say that the Gros Ventres were taught by Ni:hohat to call on them in praying and sweating but that the people did not know who they are. They lived in the very beginning of things, but whether before or after the flood, is not quite clear. They were not human beings. Gros Ventre belief does not associate them with the four winds or cardinal directions, but, vaguely, with the sacred number four, the four "ridges" or stages of full human life, and the four great floods or other great catastrophes or revolutions, of which the first was the primeval flood, that are to occur,

793
* 796 At the end of the recess after the third "crazy singing," the boisterous hilarity gave place to sober seriousness, and the solemn secret instruction and consecration of the new keeper and co-keeper were resumed in the northern section of the double lodge. About this time, too, the new Pipe child came into the lodge, and the heads and faces of the new keeper and co-keeper were uncovered. In general when, during their training, the two were learning by hearing, their heads were covered so they could concentrate their attention on what they heard; while, when learning by seeing, their heads were uncovered. The covering of the head at certain times, as on the march to the keeper's lodge immediately after the previous night's notification and raid and as during the "crazy singing," seems also to have had an "ascetic" purpose, just as the abstention from food and smoking throughout most of this first day had.

[824] The instruction after the "crazy singing" concerned primarily the ritual of smoking the Flat Pipe. Right after the uncovering of the heads of the keeper and co-keeper, the retiring keeper took peppermint leaves and gave some to the new keeper, while the retiring co-keeper did the same, giving some to the new co-keeper. Then each of the four chewed the leaves, spat three times on his or her own hands, rubbed the hands together then with the right palm rubbed his or her own left forearm up to the shoulder and with left palm the right forearm up to the shoulder, and finally with right palm from the mouth up over the face and hair to the occiput,—three rubbing or laving motions in all. This was done three times in succession.

• [372] After this peppermint laving came the fumigation or smudging rite. At the word of the retiring keeper the first of the two attendants, to the west of the door, with two sticks as tongs took a lighted buffalo chip from the fire in the center of the lodge and placed it on the incense mound (to be described later), and went back to his place, proceeding clockwise throughout. The retiring keeper then took from the supply alongside him a pinch of dried peppermint leaves in the tips of his five right-hand fingers and crawled on his knees to the incense hearth. There, kneeling squatted on his heels, and facing east, he held his hand, finger tips

The Flat Pipe Ritual

83

from which it was made, inao:, a term not used for white traders' paint.

386
[788]

The Gros Ventres used to get it out in the hills on Stiffarm Creek at Curly Head's place. It occurs as a yellow clay or dirt, as a yellow strip or streak in whitish banks or hillsides, or sometimes it was dug up from the ground. Not everyone could gather it; never men even in the old days, although in recent times Little Man used to do so; but only old women, and only certain ones at that. Coming Daylight's grandmother used to gather it and so did Coming Daylight herself who learned the method and ritual of gathering and preparing it from her grandmother. Singer's grandmother used to gather and prepare it, but she herself did not want to do it, although she had the chance to learn from her grandmother. The art and rite were "kind of handed down."

When about to gather the yellow clay, the woman would sit by the deposit, smoke, and while smoking pray that the clay she was about to gather would be abundant and good. An offering, usually of tobacco, was left at the spot. Both in gathering and in baking the clay the woman had to be alone.

[782]

The baking of the clay was done at night by the woman who had gathered it. The children could not be around making a noise, and she herself had to be very quiet. She would make a sort of batter of the clay by mixing it with water, and would knead it into flat round cakes with a round hole in the center. A fire, formerly of buffalo chips, more recently of cow manure, was made, and when it died down to coals, the cakes were put at the bottom, covered up with live coals, and a fire built on top. The woman baking did not blow the fire and she shut everything up. If you blew on the fire the whole paint would disappear. The baking had to be done very skillfully to turn out just right. The baking was fraught with some danger, and some fear went with it. If the cakes baked too brown, this was a bad omen. When the cakes were baked sufficiently all the coals were removed and the cakes, blackened on the surface, were taken out and allowed to cool. The black surface was scraped away, leaving the clay now burnt red. This red clay was then pounded to fine powder on a piece of rawhide.

[322] ●

[787]

84 *The Gros Ventres of Montana: Part II, Religion*

372 The Flat (and Feathered) Pipe keepers had to keep on hand a good supply of buffalo chips, the proper ritual fuel, as also the common fuel of the people especially when traveling out on the woodless plains. The Boy once asked his father: "Why are buffalo chips used in rites? This does not seem proper." "Buffalo chips," Lame Bull replied, "are plentiful everywhere and burn longest. And they are cleanest: the ashes do not stick to your hands; wood ashes do and are hard to rub off." After the buffalo were exterminated, cattle chips were substituted, but these, as Coming Daylight stated, "have an awful odor when burned, while buffalo chips have none." She used to gather buffalo chips for her uncle when he was Flat Pipe keeper; Cora Chandler used to gather cattle chips when her uncle Curly Head was Feathered Pipe keeper. On one occasion, after the disappearance of the buffalo, Coming Daylight went south with her husband, coming back by way of Yellowstone Park where some buffalo were kept. Here she found some buffalo chips, put them in a sack, and brought them all the way back home to give to Horse Capture, then the Flat Pipe keeper. On arriving home she went to his lodge, "covered the Pipe" with a new robe, and laid the chips at the head of the Pipe.

824 The other plants [besides peppermint] that entered into the Flat Pipe and Feathered Pipe rites were sage, tobacco, larb and wild parsley.

Sage was used for the Pipe bed and for other ritual purposes. For the spring Flat Pipe rite at least, only a certain kind of sage (*artemisia* sp.) was used. Sage was gathered by the co-keeper or one of her children, and could be gotten all the year round, even if in winter only the sticks. According to tradition, the gathering and use of sage for medicinal purposes were in the old days confined to keepers; but in more recent times the people in general have used it, by rubbing themselves with it and smelling it for headache, and by boiling the leaves, especially the top ones, and drinking the infusion for coughs, colds and tuberculosis.

824
773
276 According to the traditional story as told by The Boy, tobacco and tobacco planting came originally to the Gros Ventres from Earthmaker who taught the first man how to plant tobacco, and its cultivation and use have come down in an unbroken line since